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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002104

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/04/2017

TAGS: KWBG PBTS PREL PHUM IS

SUBJECT: HEBRON SETTLERS BRACE FOR ANOTHER EVICTION

REF: JERUSALEM 01646

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Settlers in Hebron are bracing for another eviction after Israeli Attorney General Menachem Mazuz ordered on October 1 that eviction orders proceed against two settler families squatting in Hebron's triangle market. According to Peace Now, which filed the original complaint against the squatters, the eviction is likely "within days or weeks." END SUMMARY

No Postponement of Eviction

¶2. (C) Israeli Attorney General Menachem Mazuz ordered on October 1 that eviction orders proceed against two settler families squatting in Hebron's triangle market, located next to the previously evacuated wholesale market in the Avraham Avinu settlement (reftel). The eviction was ordered in June by the High Court of Justice (HCJ). In July the settlers appealed and the order was put on hold by the Civil Administration. Hagit Ofran, Peace Now's Settlement Watch director, who filed the original complaint to the HCJ, told Poloff October 2 that the GOI decision to support the eviction order (against the Civil Administration's wishes) is "very rare." She predicted that the settlers will continue to buy time through appeals, but the eviction will be "within days or weeks."

Settlers Attack the GOI and Argue for Return to Market

¶3. (C) The Committee of the Jewish Community of Hebron issued an October 2 statement saying the Attorney General's decision "(added) an ignominious chapter to...the plunder of Jewish properties in Hebron." Hebron settler spokesperson David Wilder confirmed to Poloff October 3 that the settlers will pursue the legal battle over the marketplace. Wilder argued that the GOI is negligent as the custodian of state property by "electing to leave them vacant, unused, and rundown" and that Arab lessees have forfeited their rights by failing to pay rent (Note: The IDF closed down the marketplace in the 1990's and removed the remaining shopowners after the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000. End Note).

¶4. (C) The wholesale and triangle marketplaces in Avraham Avinu have been the subject of a longstanding dispute between Palestinian shopkeepers and settlers. According to Ofran, settler activists have power of attorney from the Ezra family (one of several Jewish claimants to the marketplace property) that explicitly permits the settlers to "dwell on (their) property." Settlers complain the GOI is denying the property owner's rights to allow Jews to occupy the marketplace. They also argue for the "right of Jews to return" to the market

place, which they claim was controlled by Jews before 1929.

(Note: The provisions of the 1997 Hebron Protocol require the GoI to allow the reopening of Palestinian shops in the market. End Note)

WALLES